

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJI #0513 2120438
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 310438Z JUL 06
FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9391
INFO RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 6714

UNCLAS JEDDAH 000513

SIPDIS

RIYADH PASS TO DHAHRAN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: CHANGES AFOOT AT THE JEDDAH ECONOMIC FORUM

Reference: JEDDAH 00497

11. (U) SUMMARY. On July 23 Consul General (CG) and Commercial Attache (CA) met the new Chairman and the Project Manager of the Jeddah Economic Forum (JEF). The CG learned of the ongoing changes at the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), the Kingdom's plans to increase tourism and the ways in which the Consulate could provide support for the JEF.
END SUMMARY.

12. (U) The Consul General (CG) and the Commercial Attache (CA) met with Mr. Sami Fouad Bahrawi, the new Chairman of the JEF, and with Mr. Berhan Hailu, the Project Manager of the JEF. Mr. Bahrawi gave his version of the recent events with the Board of Directors of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI). He emphasized that the recent changes on the Board were a result of the agenda not being implemented by the previous chairman. He said that it was not a personality clash and proof of that is that the previous agenda is still to be implemented by the current chairman.

13. (U) Mr. Bahrawi continued by saying that the new Chairman of the Board of the JCCI, Mr. Saleh A. Al-Turki, has initiated a 90-day timetable to implement changes that will enable the board to more efficiently implement the agenda. He said that the JCCI would be restructured with one Secretary General and four general managers. Each of the general managers will be responsible for one area. The areas are Women's Interests, International Investment, Tourism, and Labor Development. Mr. Bahrawi also said that the role of women will be increased and they would be appointed to more committees.

14. (U) Mr. Bahrawi said that the theme for the February 25, 2007 JEF would be "Economic Reform in Boom Times" and the focus will be on answering the question, "How does the business community implement economic reform while making the most of this boom time?" Related to this theme, he said that the King Abdullah Economic City would become a reality. He said that its development is under the control and organization of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) and that it will provide one-stop shopping on how to do business in Saudi Arabia. (See Reftel) He said that many industrial projects would be located in the new Economic City. (See Septel)

15. (U) The CG asked how the Consulate General could help the JEF. Mr. Bahrawi said that he would like the Consulate to help identify an educational partner. The JEF would require a well-known "brand" university that would increase the interest of the target audience. After he provides the Consulate General with the agenda, he would like help in identifying speakers. The speakers who had previously agreed to participate may change, because the theme of the event has changed. Lastly, he said that in an effort to increase the audience's interest and enthusiasm during the event, he would like

to add an element of interactivity. He requested that the Consulate General help to identify electronic equipment that would encourage audience interaction with the speakers. The CG agreed to help identify a brand university and immediately arranged an appointment for Bahrawi with the Public Affairs Officer. The CA agreed to identify suppliers of electronic equipment that would enable interaction between the speakers and the audience.

¶6. (U) The group discussed the new Saudi focus on tourism. When asked if tourism is a viable option for the Kingdom when you consider the cultural restrictions that will discourage many Westerners from visiting the country, Mr. Bahrawi responded that the Kingdom is open to tourism because it realizes that oil revenues will not indefinitely remain at the current level. He said that King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz is very interested in the development of tourism in the country. Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz is the Secretary General of the Higher Tourism Commission. Under his leadership, one of his priorities is a kind of "sensitivity" the training for everyone who comes into contact with tourists. Even the muttawa must receive training related to interactions with tourists. (NOTE: The Muttawa are Saudi Arabia's vigilant religious police responsible for enforcing dress codes and the separation of the sexes.)

GFOELLER